

Work Place Wire

Alternative Work Place Strategies for

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

Supporting Your Telecommuter's Technology

by Robert Moskowitz
President
American Telecommuting Association

Whether your organization is doing it to cut the costs of maintaining bricks and mortar, to give key workers the scheduling and travel flexibility they want, or to gain any of the other "win-win-win" advantages of telecommuting, at some point top management will turn to you as the Information Systems Manager and ask: "What's it going to take for us to support these people as telecommuters?"

What Services?

Your first step is to determine exactly what services the telecommuter needs. Strictly speaking, telecommuting has little – if anything – to do with technology. The top executive who stays home to craft a proposal or re-work a major presentation is telecommuting – and he may not even use a phone!

But if a telecommuter benefits from using technology when he or she is working in the company's offices, then he or she may also benefit from using some or all of that same technology when working away from the office as a telecommuter.

In practice, this may mean anything from

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providing an extension of your company's telephone system at the telecommuter's remotely located office, to providing fax service, dial up or dedicated computer connections to the office network, and even two-way video conferencing.

E-mail service is very common, very useful, and very easy to provide – either as an extension of your office network e-mail or through a separate dial-up account on AOL, CompuServe, or the Internet.

Once you know what applications you need to support, then you can think about the best ways to do it.

Phone Service

Most telecommuters who want to maintain a professional image, at least, if not office-quality telephone capabilities, have a second telephone line installed at home (or a private line installed at the telecommuting center where they'll work).

Then at the least people can dial this number and get a professional sounding response instead of a generic hello or the sweet sounds of two-year old gurgling into the telephone.

Depending on the capabilities of your company's telephone system, you can often have the telecommuter's regular office phone forwarded to this remote line. This way, you not only provide the telecommuter with some or all of the extra telephone capabilities—voice messaging, call waiting, conferencing, and so forth—he or she finds at the office, but everyone who calls this person can call just one number every day and needn't know or be concerned about what days the telecommuter works at which different locations.

(In more and more areas, a new "follow me" or "500" service from the local Bell Operating Company makes it possible for the telecommuter to have a single number ring on whatever phone he or she happens to be near.)

In some situations, you might want that phone line in the telecommuter's remote work location to be ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network). Although more expensive than regular analog phone lines, a single ISDN line can support simultaneous combinations of a phone, a fax, and a computer. Two ISDN lines are enough for two-way, full-motion video teleconferencing.

Computers

Before you worry about the technical aspects of computer connections to the telecommuter's remote office, think instead about the overall business applications. Exactly what work will the telecommuter be doing? Exactly what hardware and software will he or she require? Once you have that written down, you can begin to assess the computer requirements more precisely.

Many computer-based telecommuters like to have a computer at work and another at home, both capable of connecting to the office network so files don't have to be carried from one location to the other on disk. But more and more others are finding it more effective to have a single lightweight laptop they use at home, while telecommuting, and also while traveling.

With wireless or cable connections to the office network, it's easy to keep the files on a laptop in synch with the files other people are using. An even if you don't have ISDN, a 28,800 bps V.34 modem allows you to pump quite a bit of data over a regular telephone line.

Fax Capabilities

Faxing documents is one of the most common ways for telecommuters to keep in touch with others around the world. For a fixed work location at home, a multi-purpose machine is very useful. Such machines send and receive faxes, copy, and print on plain paper. Many also work as a scanner, and in minutes can be configured to forward incoming faxes right into an attached PC. Another approach is the fax-modem, a device that literally allows the telecommuter's computer to generate print-outs in almost any office in the world!

In The Office

All you need for most of these connections is a gateway device. This includes both software and hardware, and is basically a computer running special software and fitted with an Ethernet card for your network and with a modem that connects to an outside line. Network packets go through the gateway in both directions enroute to and from people using the network, including telecommuters dialing up to the modem line.

If you're supporting a great many telecommuters, you might need a bank of modems to receive their dial-up connections. The rule of thumb is to have one modem for every eight telecommuters, but this varies greatly depending on how many hours each one needs to be on-line. Your internal PBX or central office service can provide a rotary connection so all telecommuters dial a single number, and are automatically switched onto the next available modem. Such hardware and the proper software also enable something called "document conferencing," which is simply a process that lets two or more people edit the same data file simultaneously from whatever computer they happen to be using.

Another neat device is the MultiMux, from MultiTech Systems of Mounds View, Minnesota. It provides a virtually invisible telecommunications connection between a telecommuter and his or her headquarters office, combining voice, data, and fax through a 28,800 bps modem over a standard telephone line. Once connected, the MultiMux transforms the telecommuter's phone—wherever it is—into a highly secure station on the office's telephone network, giving telecommuters all the same services and capabilities they have when working directly in the company's office, and transferring all toll charges onto the regular office bill.

Conclusion

The level of technical support necessary to support a telecommuter should be based upon the job duties of the telecommuter and various applications necessary to fulfill those job duties. The exact mix of telecommunications ser-

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Project Managers:
Daniel Wright and Linnea Berg
For more information, call: 213/922-2811

Mailing address:
MTA, P.O. Box 194, Los Angeles, 90053

vices, hardware and software will vary from one telecommuter to the next. Generally, the level of technical support necessary is less than you might think. Only the most sophisticated telecommuters might require video teleconferencing, remote access to the office network and similar services. Through appropriate analysis, the Information System Manager and staff can provide good technical support to company telecommuters. ■

Robert Moskowitz is a business consultant based in Woodland Hills, CA, who writes frequently on productivity, office automation and technology. He is President of the American Telecommuting Association, a membership organization serving the needs of telecommuters and those who want to become telecommuters.

Resources

Manuals

Telecommuting: A Formula for Business Success

Telecommuting: A Formula for Business Success is part of the *Workplace Wire* program for Southern California scheduled for publication in June, 1996. This is a two volume step-by-step telecommuting and alternative office implementation manual. Volume 1 covers how to select telecommuters, what to include in your policy document, and how to evaluate a program. Volume 2 is a training guide that includes a complete curriculum with exercises, overheads, and handouts.

*To Order your advance copy: Contact the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, (213) 922-2811.
Price: \$39*

Managing People You Can't See

by Donna Wolverton

Managing People You Can't See is a performance management self-study guide for managers of telecommuters. This thorough manual walks managers/supervisors through the process of defining objectives for employees, identifying work actions, and establishing good communication feedback procedures. Worksheets are included.

*To Order: Contact Donna Wolverton, 4608 Glencoe Ave., Suite 5, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292-6347, (310) 822-4157
Price: \$18.95*

Telecommuting Implementation Manual

by Midwest Institute for Telecommuting Education (MiTE)

This manual provides ideas and steps to implementing a telecommuting program within your organization. It also examines equipment, employment laws, liability issues, and ways to resolve them. The manual includes worksheets. It draws on the

expertise of over 50 companies.

*Contact: MiTE at (612) 463-3146 or Fax (612) 879-5400
Cost: \$95.00*

Periodicals

Telecommuting Review

by Gil Gordon Associates

Written for employers and vendors, *Telecommuting Review* is a monthly newsletter covering telecommuting progress since 1984. Public and private sector firms can gain ideas and solutions for beginning or expanding successful telecommuting programs.

*To order: Contact Gil Gordon Associates, 10 Donner Court, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852, (908) 329-2266. World Wide Web site: <http://www.gilgordon.com/>.
Price: \$177 annually*

Videos

It's About Time

by Pacific Bell

It's About Time is a short video that provides an overview of telecommuting. Shown are the benefits of telecommuting and a depiction of the many jobs for which telecommuting is viable.

To Order: Contact Pacific Bell (800) PACBELL

Conferences/Seminars

Telecommuting World Conference - "Effective Technology and Productive Practices for Dispersed Offices and Mobile Workers" *September 9-11*

Telecommuting World is a new Conference and Exhibition that explores distributed work practices in the real business world. The conference program is for senior-level managers and other professionals in small to mid-size companies (10-1,000 employees) seeking practical guidance on how to explore, initiate or expand telecommuting as a response to business opportunity. The program includes workshops, seminars, and case studies that will enable conference participants to learn how to design, implement and manage telecommuting with the goal of solving immediate problems. The conference will also provide conferees opportunity to gain the insight and skills needed to steer around the pitfalls of telecommuting.

Where: San Francisco Hyatt Regency Contact: Kit Hamilton, Comtek International, (203) 834-1122

Technologies That Support Telecommuting

May 30, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Using live demonstrations of video conferencing and the

Internet, including the World Wide Web and electronic mail, this seminar will provide an overview of popular technology that offers numerous benefits for telecommuting. This is just one of six different seminars to be offered by the Southern California Telecommuting Partnership (SCTP) in May, June, and July of this year. Call them for complete information on all seminars.

Where: Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, 350 South Bixel Street, Los Angeles, CA

Contact: Southern California Telecommuting Partnership, (800) 6INFOHWY (800-646-3649)

Price: Free

GTE University. Where It All Falls Into Place.

Universal City, May 29 or May 30

Long Beach June 27

This one day seminar addresses real-world telecommunications needs of business and technology managers. Courses will provide live, hands-on demonstrations that show meaningful applications. They have courses in five areas.

1) **FUNDAMENTALS** includes courses in LAN, Voice and Wide Area Network fundamentals (CIOs and other business managers who need general knowledge of the issues);

2) **COMPUTER/TELEPHONY INTEGRATION** offers practical insights into joining together voice, video, and data onto one line;

3) **CLIENT/ SERVER COMMUNICATIONS** provides technical managers with solutions for interworking, multimedia, and high-speed LANs and WANs;

4) **APPLYING THE TECHNOLOGY** explores community-based networks, wireless communications, and integrated networks;

5) **DISTRIBUTED NETWORK SOLUTIONS** addresses the challenges and opportunities of remote access and telecommuting, the Internet, and a variety of real-world applications.

To Register: Call 1-800-227-4374

Price: Free

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Southern California Association of Governments



TO:



FAX: 213-922-2849

Evaluation Survey

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11. What I liked least about the *WorkPlace Wire* was: _____

Thank you. Please fax your responses to the number above.

MIS

Work Place Wire

Alternative Work Place Strategies for

FACILITIES PROFESSIONALS

Why Less Is More: Telecommuting as a Facilities Strategy

by Gil E. Gordon
Gil Gordon Associates

I suppose it's risky to suggest to Southern California facilities directors that the ground is shifting under their feet - but I'll do it anyway. It's the best way to describe the fundamental change you are facing in how and where the employees in your organizations work. Fortunately, this is one time when you can have a lot more control over this kind of major movement - and with the right planning, you can make sure it has a positive, not a devastating, outcome.

Since 1982, I have never seen a concept catch on as quickly as is happening today with the link between telecommuting and facilities management. This qualifies it as a trend, not a fad, and strongly indicates that our thinking about office design and space planning will never be the same.

How We Got Where We Are

Telecommuting's relatively short history (approximately 20 years) has been marked by much more talk than action about the space-savings potential. It was a "weather" issue - just about everyone talked about it but nobody did anything about it. This was true for four reasons:

TOO LITTLE USE: The general timidity with which most employers used telecommuting meant that the numbers just weren't right; not enough people were working away from the office for enough days to even consider any kind of space-planning impacts;

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TOO FEW TOOLS: The technologies for mobile work weren't well-enough developed to allow large numbers of employees - especially in areas such as field sales - to work effectively away from the office for much of the week;

TOO FEW OPTIONS: The concepts of non-territorial offices and hoteling, among other alternatives, were not widely known or understood; the "open plan" office was, for many employers, the extent of innovation - and even that was not widely accepted or welcomed;

TOO FEW OPTIONS: When it came to cost-cutting, the tried-and-true (and, in many cases, the tried-and-failed) approach of cutting staff was the first method most CEO's reached for. The rush to downsize staff yields terrific short-term

results, but as we're seeing now, there can be long-term consequences. Nevertheless, it seemed (and probably still seems) "normal" to cut back on costs by cutting back on headcount.

I'd argue today that these four obstacles have been (or at least are being) removed. Most important, perhaps, is the last one: CEO's (and Wall Street, and the White House) seem to be waking up to the fact that downsizing staff isn't all it was cracked up to be. There is a growing awareness that firms can look at the near-sacred "crown jewels" of the headquarters and other buildings as the source of big cost savings - and in doing so, are realizing that the space and buildings you own or lease may in fact be a liability, not an asset.

One reason this is becoming clear is that research done by Prof. Frank Becker and his team at Cornell University, and by others, shows just how underutilized the office is for most knowledge workers. In many cases, their desks and offices are used roughly one-third of the time - which means that the very expensive asset we call "the office" underperforms by two-thirds. In today's business climate, that's simply unacceptable.

What Should You Do?

For starters, it's easier to say what you shouldn't do as you try to capitalize on all these changes: it's a mistake to get greedy about space savings, and that's exactly what some firms seem to be doing. This greed is based on some math with good results but bad logic. "If we can save \$2 million by having 20% of our workforce out of the office two or three days a week," the argument goes, "that means we can save \$10 million if we send everyone home two or three days a week." Sorry, but it's not that simple: few firms can send "everyone" home two or three days a week, and his or any similar number-crunching is as short-sighted as is overly-aggressive staff cutting.

Here are some suggestions that should work out much better:

1. **FIND ALLIES** - Some of the most impressive alternative-officing projects I've seen came from synergistic, and in some cases, unusual, partnerships in organizations. This isn't an issue that can be tackled by the facilities manager alone; you have to carefully choose your allies and come up with a coordinated effort.

Among the potential allies are: human resources (concerned with recruitment and retention, and employee effectiveness); line managers (concerned with getting the work done, managing their budgets, and "doing more with less"); sales/marketing (concerned with providing better customer service and jumping ahead of the competition), and finance (concerned with what finance people are always concerned with). This is truly a case where two, or more, heads are better than one - if for no other reason than a coordinated effort spreads the workload and shows the CEO that this isn't any one function's pet project.

2. **SOLVE PROBLEMS, DON'T SELL** - You aren't likely to get your CEO's support if you pitch telecommuting or any other officing alternative as the "fad du jour". In other words, don't let yourself be seen as selling a solution in search of a problem. My rule of thumb is to focus on the "3 a.m. test" - assume you walked into your CEO's bedroom at 3 a.m. and woke him/her up and asked, "What are the three biggest problems facing this organization today?"

I seriously doubt that any CEO would include on that list, "Gee, I've really been struggling with how we can do more telecommuting." You know, or should know, what's on your CEO's list - so find a way to credibly link officing strategies to one of those problems.

3. **BE REALISTIC ABOUT VACANCY AND LEASES** - Office space that you own or have under lease isn't like most other com-

modities - you can't easily send it back to the manufacturer, sell it off at reduced prices, or otherwise make it (and the associated costs) go away. Even if you do manage to free up some space via telecommuting, it's not likely you'll be able to lease or sub-lease that space for top dollar - unless you're in a market where the vacancy rate is well below the national average.

This simple fact has been the undoing of some otherwise inspired space-related alternative officing projects. Aggressive plans to turn out the field sales organization en masse, and shut down dozens of branch offices around the country, can hit the brick wall of reality when employers find they can only effect these changes as their leases expire.

The characteristics of your local market, your relationship with your landlord, the suitability of your space for other uses, and the terms of your lease are among the factors to consider when you're figuring out just how quickly those millions in savings might drop to the bottom line.

4. **DO THE RIGHT MATH** - Speaking of figuring out the numbers, be sure you take an all-inclusive view when you build your spreadsheet. The direct costs of putting a roof over employees' heads are obvious, but there are some indirect costs to consider as well - many of which won't normally be in your budget. For example, fewer people in the office may mean less need for parking, less security staff, less cafeteria subsidy, less child-care center staffing, one fewer elevator running, etc. These indirect costs don't fall in direct proportion to the number of telecommuters or virtual-office workers - and in some cases might not fall at all. Just be sure you're looking at more than the square footage involved - that's only part of the picture.

5. **THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT "OFFICING"** - As you may have read in other issues of *The WorkPlace Wire*, there's an ever-increasing range of alternative officing options available. Telecommuting is just one of them, and even that takes several forms. We're starting to see lots of experimentation with office alternatives even for people who come to the office five days a week - the goal of which is to carefully but deliberately challenge, if not end, the implicit promise that every employee is constitutionally

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guaranteed to 143 square feet of space with his or her name on it. While it might be nice to slash your facilities needs and costs by one-third or more, the reality is that most organizations won't achieve that kind of savings – unless they use slash-and-burn strategies for cutting space that are likely to be as dysfunctional as what happens when the same is done to cut staff.

6. DON'T REINVENT TOO MUCH - There's a wealth of information available about alternative officing methods and implementation, so you don't need to start from scratch. Industry groups such as IFMA and IDRC are good places to start, and don't overlook the leading office furnishing vendors and design consultants either. Last but not least, the World Wide Web is a good research resource as well.

7. LOOK FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD - One of the big challenges in facilities planning has always been to figure out how much the organization itself will change so you can figure out how much the space that organization needs will change. This has never been an easy task, and it's not going to get any easier.

Not only are you dealing with changes in the products and services your firm offers, but you're also trying to figure out who will do the work (i.e., your own employees? your outsourcing partner? your "virtual organization"?) and where that work will be done (i.e., in your offices? at a telecommuting center? at employees' homes? in employees' cars? in executive-suites offices?). Unfortunately, this problem isn't going away – welcome to the late 1990's.

One thing is for sure amidst this uncertainty: you probably can't extrapolate from the past – even the recent past – to the future. You can, however, assume that you will have the option, if not the obligation, to consciously under-plan and under-build for the future. That is, you're going to assume that some portion of the workforce will always be in motion, so that you'll need anywhere from 5% to 20% less space than you'd need if everyone was in the office at the same time. This makes for a very attractive space planning graph, because you can put a dollar value on all the space you won't need over the planning horizon.

8. MONITOR AND EVALUATE - Trying to evaluate how you've done with your facilities planning in the context of telecommuting isn't easy, but you have to give it your best try. The evaluation criteria include measures of employee attitudes, performance, and retention (all of which are, of course, affected by factors other than just space) and also, more important, the assessment of your customers. Organizations that have tried to go too far too fast with alternative officing have found, perhaps to their surprise, that customers feel the pain as much or more than their own employees. The mobile worker who becomes too mobile may not be able to deliver quality service to key customers; what these organizations save on space they may lose in sales or goodwill.

Is Less More? Stay Tuned

Can your organization actually do more with less space? Can your

employees adapt to a work model where the office becomes a place to work, not the place to work? And can we make sure that we use telecommuting and other workplace alternatives in ways that truly are "win-win" solutions? The truth is, the jury's still out. We're now entering a period of much more rapid growth in telecommuting, not only in Southern California but almost everywhere. The challenge is to find the right way to balance costs, space, technology, design, employee preferences, customer expectations, and competitive demands.

Feel that ground shifting yet? ■

Gil Gordon heads Gil Gordon Associates, a consulting firm in Monmouth Junction, NJ specializing since 1982 in implementation of telecommuting and the virtual office. He conducts the annual TELECOMMUTE conferences, and works at home when he's not traveling the globe telling other people how to do likewise.

Resources

Conferences

Telecommuting World Conference - "Effective Technology and Productive Practices for Dispersed Offices and Mobile Workers"

September 9-11

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Where: San Francisco Hyatt Regency

Contact: Kit Hamilton, Comtek International, (203) 834-1122

Making Telecommuting a Part of Your Workplace

June 18 or July 16

This workshop will lead participants through telecommuting program design, implementation, and evaluation. Key topics will highlight issues such as winning management's approval, maintaining communication, and delegating work responsibilities. This is just one of six different seminars to be offered by the Southern California Telecommuting Partnership (SCTP) in May, June, and July of this year. Call them for complete information on all seminars.

When: June 18, County of Ventura Offices, 800 South Victoria Ave., Ventura, CA;

July 16, Long Beach Telecenter, 3447 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 220, Long Beach, CA

Contact: Southern California Telecommuting Partnership, (800) 6INFOHWY

Books

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Price: \$39

The Underground Guide to Telecommuting

Chapter 2 "Command Central: The Virtual Office"

by Woody Leonhard

The Underground Guide to Telecommuting: Slightly Askew Advice on Leaving the Rat Race Behind is an entertaining book that is chock full of practical information and clear explanations of technical issues related to setting up a home office. For facilities departments, it makes a valuable reference book for suggestions to home telecommuters for setting up a home office that includes an appendix complete with vendors who offer hardware, software, or service - name, phone numbers, and fax numbers. Leonhard makes technical information accessible and easy to understand for the lay person.

The book gives a telecommuter's perspective - one who will be planning to telecommute most of the time and sets up a home office. The chapters are self contained units that cover the virtual office, PCs, communications equipment, teleemployees, telebosses, becoming an independent worker, taxes, laws, and accounting, and more.

Publisher: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995,
(617) 944-2700.

Price: \$24.95

Managing the Reinvented Workplace

by William Sims, Michael Joroff, and Franklin Becker

This report addresses common challenges and issues faced by companies creating and managing all types of alternative workplace strategies. It discusses specific practices for managing team environments, non-territorial offices, home-based telecommuting, telework centers, and virtual office programs. Findings and recommendations are based on case studies of more than 25 leading-edge organizations.

Publisher: International Development Research Foundation, 35 Technology Parkway, Norcross, GA 30092, (770) 446-8955 ext. 40

Price: \$99.95

Associations

American Telecommuting Association

The American Telecommuting Association (ATA) is a membership group that provides a handbook, newsletter, discount purchasing, and other services to people who presently are telecommuters, or who would like to be. They can be contacted at: American Telecommuting Association, 1220 L St. N.W., Suite 100, Washington D.C. 20005, by telephone at 800-ATA-4-YOU (1-800-282-4968), or by e-mail at "YourATA@aol.com".

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FAC

Work Place Wire

Alternative Work Place Strategies for
YOUR BUSINESS

Acceptance

by Robert Moskowitz
President
American Telecommuting Association

Previous issues of the *Workplace Wire* have focused upon the changing nature of the workplace and upon case studies of real companies using alternative workplace strategies to improve their bottom line. As a business owner or executive, you need to understand how organizational factors and corporate culture accommodate changes associated with a distributed work force. With years of experience under our collective belt, it's now possible to look back and begin to see the stages of development through which telecommuting grows in a typical organization.

These stages include the tentative first steps of individual telecommuters or pilot programs, followed by relatively elaborate formal arrangements for relatively few telecommuters, then a phase of accelerating growth in the number of telecommuters and the scope of their responsibilities, and finally an acceptance or "end-stage" phase.

Let's look at each of these stages in a little more detail:

Stage 1: Tentative first steps

Few organizations are formed with the idea of relying on telecommuters. Instead, the

As a business owner or executive, you need to understand how organizational factors and corporate culture accommodate changes associated with a distributed work force.

tendency is to expect people to show up for work every business day, and stay until they've "finished for the day."

But under the pressure of increased costs, more complex workforce requirements, accelerating time frames, shortening delivery schedules, and urban sprawl, in the past decade or two most organizations began looking hard for new ways to operate more cheaply, flexibly, and productively. Many found a good answer in the realm of telecommuting.

If management had a relatively far-sighted outlook, they tended to push the organization toward telecommuting by commissioning one or more pilot programs. Although these might not be widely publicized within the organization, even at this early stage there is almost certainly a group of pro-telecommuting managers somewhere within the organization. And this group's knowledge and energies can be tapped to help the organization advance toward later stages of development.

If management had a relatively short-sighted outlook, they tended to do very little and instead allowed individuals to pull the

organization into the modern age by insisting on telecommuting and -- whether because of their status or indispensability -- making their demands stick. These individuals, or "guerrilla" telecommuters, might not be visible to the vast majority of employees. But they are slowly and surely laying the groundwork for later advances in the organization's acceptance of telecommuting.

In any case, year after year of successful telecommuting tends to yield enough tangible benefits for almost any organization to recognize this modular mode of working as a viable business tool. From here, it's easy to move toward the second stage of telecommuting development.

Stage 2: Relatively elaborate formal arrangements for relatively few telecommuters

Once an organization has tasted the fruits of telecommuting --higher productivity, lower costs, more satisfied and loyal employees, greater flexibility and creativity, easier recruiting, lower workforce turnover, and so forth -- it's very difficult to renounce any further refreshment.

The natural consequence, in fact, is to expand the number of telecommuters within the organization. In most organizations, however, there remain a core group of managers or supervisors who resist too fast a shift to any new paradigm of employment, and who therefore counsel a "go slow" attitude toward telecommuting, as well.

In most cases, the manifestation of these opposite forces is the construction of elaborate safeguards against any imagined abuse of telecommuting privileges, but the willingness to approve more and more telecommuters who will work under these safeguards.

That's why you'll frequently see 10 to 30 person pilot programs expand during the following year or two to "roll outs" or expanded pilots involving 50 to 200 telecommuters. In very large organizations, each division can have one or more telecommuting "programs" of this size.

This second phase can last a very short time -- six months or a year -- or a very long time -- five to ten years. The time frame depends roughly on several factors, such as:

Profitability -- when the organization is making a lot of money, it doesn't feel the urge to break new ground just to cut costs. So it can sustain a workforce that commutes physically (physicommuters) a while longer than a comparable but relatively unprofitable organization.

Flexibility -- when top management is willing to entertain new ideas and new work methods, telecommuting gets a fair hearing

and a real-life trial far sooner than when top management is resistant to change.

Size -- smaller organizations are more likely to listen to the demands of individuals who want to telecommute, but larger organizations are more likely to have a full-time staff of facilities managers, transportation coordinators, or others whose calculations unwaveringly reveal how much the organization can save or profit through large-scale workforce telecommuting. What's more, these multi-million dollar savings or profits have a mind of their own, and tend to persuade management that this crazy, new-fangled approach to employment makes a lot more sense than anyone previously might have guessed.

Industry -- banks, insurance companies, software companies, sales organizations, and other "symbolic analysis" industries are recognizing the advantages of telecommuting and switching to this new work paradigm far faster than hospitals, schools, publishers, law firms, and other organizations that rely heavily on in-person meetings to build consensus and push work toward completion.

Other Factors -- fads and short-term pressures tend to promote telecommuting for secondary reasons. For example, when clean air legislation was in vogue, telecommuting was one of several dozen methods an organization could use to help it meet the stringent requirements. Now that downsizing is in vogue, telecommuting provides an extra way to reduce corporate commitments for real estate and other infrastructure.

Stage 3: Accelerating growth in the number of telecommuters and their scope of responsibilities

At a certain point, the organization reaches a third stage of acceptance. Here it begins to create telecommuters faster than it adds new positions. Sometimes, this trend often begins when the organization comes under new financial pressures to drastically reduce costs. Other times, it commences when upper layers of management suddenly recognize the major productivity and other advantages that telecommuting has been delivering, and actively seek to realize more of them.

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Project Managers: Daniel Wright and Linnea Berg
For more information, call: 213/922-2811

Mailing address:
MTA, P.O. Box 194, Los Angeles, 90053

Whatever the reasons, the organization experiencing this third stage of development in telecommuting growth begins to transform itself from an organization primarily comprised of physicommuters, but with a few telecommuters, into a more flexible organization where telecommuting and physicommuting are merely two interchangeable approaches to the same end: maximum productivity.

In addition, the organization stops limiting the telecommuting option to relatively "isolated" workers like key-punchers, sales staff, and computer programmers. Now top management accepts the advantages of telecommuting for many more positions with much broader responsibilities. Supervisors, team leaders, support staff, and professional staff all find themselves eligible to become telecommuters.

Organizations in this third stage often begin planning for additional telecommuters in years to come. They plan on using less office space and other facilities-oriented resources for a given number of employees. They offer telecommuting as an option to ever-larger numbers of current employees. And they re-organize and re-define more positions to permit and support telecommuting.

At this stage, a willingness to telecommute can begin to become a positive attribute that management actively appreciates in its new hires. An insistence on telecommuting often stops being a barrier to success within the organization. And a resistance to approving or supervising telecommuters may begin to show up as a black mark on a manager's record.

Stage 4: Acceptance

Organizational acceptance of telecommuting probably contains many nuances we have not yet noticed, simply because we don't have enough years of experience to recognize the subtle distinctions. But whatever the various shadings, organizations that have reached the acceptance stage are uniformly supportive of their telecommuters' individuality.

In practice, organizations at this fourth stage of development are willing to listen to telecommuters who want to spend more time -- or less time -- in the company's offices. They freely negotiate telecommuting agreements that meet the needs of each person, as well as the basic policies and objectives of the organization. They remain flexible enough to grant telecommuters frequent, small changes to their basic working pattern and responsibilities. And they stay focused on ends, rather than means, so that individuals can generally find enough freedom within the organization to make their best contributions both while telecommuting and while physicommuting to work. ■

Robert Maskowitz is a business consultant based in Woodland Hills, CA, who writes frequently on productivity, office automation and technology. He is President of the American Telecommuting Association, a membership organization serving the needs of telecommuters and those who want to become telecommuters.

Resources

Conferences

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September 9-11

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Where: San Francisco Hyatt Regency

Contact: Kit Hamilton, Comtek International, (203) 834-1122

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To Order your advance copy: Contact the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, (213) 922-2811.

Price: \$39

The Virtual Corporation

by William H. Davidow & Michael S. Malone

The Virtual Corporation is focused at structuring and revitalizing

the corporation for the 21st Century. The book draws on international case studies which illustrate the authors' ideas of change for corporations to remain competitive as customer-driven companies.

*To order: Contact Edward Burlingham Books/Harper Business; HarperCollins Publisher, NY, New York. (212) 207-7000
Price: \$23.00*

Managing People You Can't See

by Donna Wolverson

Managing People You Can't See is a performance management self-study guide for managers of telecommuters. This thorough manual walks managers/supervisors through defining objectives for their employees, identifying work actions, and establishing good communication feedback procedures. Worksheets are included.

*To Order: Contact Donna Wolverson, (310) 822-4157, 4608 Glencoe Ave., Suite 5, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292-6347.
Price: \$18.95.*

Associations

American Telecommuting Association (ATA)

American Telecommuting Association (ATA) is a membership organization that provides information and services for the needs of telecommuters and those who want to become telecommuters. The ATA Newsletter keeps up with current telecommuter issues, trends, and equipment.

*Contact: American Telecommuting Association (ATA) 1220 L St. N.W., Suite 100, Washington D.C. 20005, 1-800-ATA-4-YOU (1-800-282-4968), or e-mail: YourATA@aol.com.
Price: \$50 annually.*

Periodicals

Telecommuting Review

by Gil Gordon Associates

Written for employers and vendors, Telecommuting Review is a monthly newsletter covering telecommuting progress since 1984. Public and private sector firms can gain ideas and solutions for beginning or expanding successful telecommuting programs.

*To order: Contact Gil Gordon Associates, 10 Donner Court, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852, (908) 329-2266. World Wide Web site: <http://www.gilgordon.com/>
Price: \$177 annually.*

TeleTrends

TeleTrends. The quarterly journal of the Telecommuting Advisory Council. Available free to members.

*To order: Contact Telecommuting Advisory Council (213) 993-6070.
Price: Free for members.*

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TO:



FAX: 213-922-2849

Evaluation Survey

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On a scale of 1 to 5: 5 – "Strongly Agree," 1 – "Strongly Disagree," and 3 – "I don't know," please rate the following:

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Don't Know</i>		<i>Strongly Agree</i>
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9. The *WorkPlace Wire* should include information about: _____

10. What I liked most about the *WorkPlace Wire* was: _____

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Thank you. Please fax your responses to the number above.

CEO

Work Place Wire

Alternative Work Place Strategies for

HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS

Making it Happen

by Jack M. Nilles, President
JALA International, Inc.

Now that you've decided to think about getting ready to consider testing telecommuting, there are some crucial points to keep in mind as you develop your program and take those first implementation steps.

Telecommuting knowledge is not inherited

Neither telemanagers nor telecommuters are born with the ability. Successful telecommuting takes some training for most people, particularly for those with long experience in traditional organizations. In particular, the management process for telecommuting is materially different from the well-known managing-by-walking-around system. Telecommuters are not walk-aroundable. Therefore, both managers and telecommuters need to develop WIDE (Working-In-a-Distributed Environment) skills, if they don't already have them.

WIDE skills are of two sorts: technology adeptness and management competence. Technology adeptness is important to the extent that your telecommuters' work—or the work that will be done during telecommuting periods—is technology-based. However, keep in mind that a substantial amount of telecommuting is done without much more exotic technology than telephones and, maybe, fax machines. If your telecommuters will use such things as personal computers, modems, printers, ISDN lines, and

*“Trust depends
both on quality
communication
between
individuals and
the mutual
knowledge that
each party will
fulfill his/her
working
obligations”*

the like while they're telecommuting, you need to make sure that they know how to use them effectively; the local guru won't be around to help them if they're stuck at home. More on the technology later.

While lack of sufficient technology expertise can slow things down, lack of management expertise can be fatal to telecommuting. Successful telecommuting is based on trust between telemanagers and telecommuters. Trust is not an overabundant commodity in these days of lean-and-meaning, downsizing, right-sizing, outsourcing, and re-engineering. Trust depends both on quality communication between individuals and the mutual knowledge (based on experience) that each party will fulfill his/her working obligations. During traditional office life, this trust develops as a result of continued face-to-face interaction over some sufficiently long period (typically at least several months, often several years). But, when employees are telecommuting one or more days per week—particularly if the goal is to have them telecommuting the majority of the week—and their supervisors are not in the same locations, then different management techniques are needed.

Specifically, both telemanagers and telecommuters need to concentrate on the results of the work to be performed, not on the performance

process. The job of the successful telemanager is to set out the objectives of the work to be performed, establish the nature and quality of the deliverables, set the schedule, make sure that the telecommuter has the necessary background and tools to do the job—all of this with the telecommuter's participation—and then get out of the way. This objectives-setting cycle must be repeated for every significant telecommuting task until it's second nature to all concerned.

That takes training for most people. We typically insist on separate, formal, half-day training sessions for the telemanagers and telecommuters (and still others for telework center managers). They are formal because it is important that everybody understands the rules and management techniques (a formal agenda helps make sure that nothing is left out). They are separate because different emphasis is required for each group; telemanagers who will not be telecommuting from home needn't spend much time on the details of setting up a home office. The content of these sessions covers the fundamentals of telemanagement—how to decide what's telecommutable; goal setting; scheduling; effective communications techniques; motivating (both self and others)—as well as the nitty-gritty of company telecommuting policies and procedures. We usually also insist on a third session in which the telecommuters and telemanagers get together and mutually structure the first week's (or days' or months') telecommuting agendas.

Although a few half-day sessions may not sound like much, our evaluations of telecommuting projects tell us that it makes a difference where it counts: on employee productivity. It is particularly important to train the managers; where we find negative results it is usually traceable to a manager's ignorance of proper telemanagement techniques.

Get the implementation sequence right

As the Boy Scout motto insists: Be Prepared! Here's the tried and true winning sequence. Planning is important in developing telecommuting. Spend some time imagining all the things that could go wrong in a telecommuting situation and then devise ways to avoid or fix them effectively. Develop a formal plan if the project involves more than a few people, and involve the prospective participants in the planning process. Make sure that the necessary changes to company policies and procedures are at least in draft form. Most important, make sure you (and the boss) know what constitutes success. Why are you trying telecommuting; what are your success criteria? How will you know when you've done it?

If you will be introducing new technology (ISDN, ATM, remote access to LANs, videoconferencing, etc.) as part of the implementation, be sure to test it thoroughly before it gets delivered to the telecommuters. You don't want to be spending

time and effort debugging technology when you should be concentrating on the management issues. Remember that not all people are created as telecommuters or telemanagers. Some jobs don't fit; some personalities don't work well in telecommuting situations. Select both the telecommuters and the telemanagers on the basis of their job characteristics and dispositions—all of them should be volunteers. If a manager doesn't feel comfortable about supervising telecommuters, don't force it. Some telecommuters don't want to work from home. Do you have a telework center as an option?

Planning, technology selection and testing, people selection, then training. Training should occur just when everything is ready to go. Once the formal training sessions are completed—and not until—telecommuting should begin.

Despite all the planning and preparation, telecommuting takes some getting used to for many novice telecommuters and telemanagers. If productivity improvement was one of your goals, don't panic if it doesn't happen—or even drops—at first. For the first few weeks or months it is desirable to have the participants attend focus group meetings. The meetings have a twofold purpose: reinforcing the training, and surfacing operational problems. During these meetings you want to find out what's working, of course, but emphasize problem solving: what isn't working as well as expected and how can it be fixed?

Wait a minimum of six months after telecommuting officially begins before you make your first formal impact measurements (of course, you can take them before then, but don't be surprised if you see lots of fluctuations). If you have followed all of the other steps just summarized, then what you had hoped for (higher productivity, improved morale, reduced turnover, happier campers, diminished office space demand) should be appearing. What you were worrying about probably hasn't happened. You have helped create a new type of organization that functions better for the company, the employees, and the community. And it will improve with time. ■

Known internationally as "the father of telecommuting/teleworking,"

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Jack Nilles is the founder of JALA International—a management consulting firm that has developed or evaluated telecommuting projects for a variety of Fortune 100 companies.

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Where: San Francisco Hyatt Regency

Contact: Kit Hamilton, Comtek International, (203) 834-1122

Making Telecommuting a Part of Your Workplace

June 18 or July 16

This workshop will lead participants through telecommuting program design implementation and evaluation. Key topics will highlight issues such as winning management's approval, maintaining communication and delegating work responsibilities. This is just one of six different seminars to be offered by the Southern California Telecommuting Partnership (SCTP) in May, June, and July of this year. Call them for complete information on all seminars.

Contact: Southern California Telecommuting Partnership,
(800) 6INFOHWY

When: June 18, County of Ventura Offices, 800 South Victoria Ave.,
Ventura, CA;

July 16, Long Beach Telecenter, 3447 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 220,
Long Beach, CA

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Price: \$39

Telecommute America! 1995 Educational Seminar Participant Materials

Module 2, 4, & 5 "Planning Your Telecommuting Operation," "Implementing Your Telecommuting Operation" and "Monitoring and Evaluating Your Telecommuting Operation"

by AT&T School of Business

Planning, Implementing, Monitoring, and Evaluating Your Telecommuting Operation, the second, fourth, and fifth module in the Telecommute America! 1995 Educational Seminar Participant Materials Manual provides an excellent workbook overview for key considerations in any alternative workplace strategy. The worksheet checklists walk through assessment and planning for your organization:

1) Is your organization/business ready to support a non-traditional work operation? What jobs are appropriate for telecommuting? Who are good candidates for working non-traditionally?

2) What are the challenges and obstacles that others have confronted? What process allows successful implementation? What is in the telecommuter/supervisor agreement? What are telecommuting skills for managers and employees?

3) Who are key stakeholders? What is the value of pre and post surveys? What are the components of a cost/benefit analysis? How do you measure productivity? The manual provides a range of tools that can be immediately used in planning, implementing, monitoring, or evaluating a telecommuting/alternative office program.

Publisher: AT&T, 1995.

Contact: Ken Radziwanowski, (908) 302-3363

The Virtual Office Survival Handbook

Chapter 11 "Coping with the Psychological Issues of Working Alone" and Chapter 12 "Maintaining Visibility"

by Alice Bredin

The Virtual Office Survival Handbook provides ideas for setting up, surviving, and thriving in the non-traditional work arrangement. These two chapters deal with the common human resource issues encountered when workers are adjusting to feeling isolated and "out of the organizational loop" due to telecommuting.

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012, (212) 850-6000.

Price: \$16.95

Telecommuting Implementation Manual

by Midwest Institute for Telecommuting Education (MiTE)

This manual provides ideas for marketing a telecommuting implementation program within your organization. It also examines equipment, employment laws, liability issues, and ways to resolve them. The manual includes worksheets. It draws on the expertise of over 50 companies.

Contact: MiTE at (612) 463-3146 or Fax (612) 879-5400

Cost: \$95.00

American Telecommuting Association

The American Telecommuting Association (ATA) is a membership group that provides a handbook, newsletter, discount purchasing, and other services to people who presently are telecommuters, or who would like to be.

Contact: American Telecommuting Association, 1220 L St. N.W., Suite 100, Washington D.C. 20005, by telephone at 800-ATA-4-YOU (1-800-282-4968), or by e-mail at "YourATA@aol.com".

The AT&T Telecommuting Connection(tm) Kit

This kit consists of a videotape and handbook that looks at the forces behind telecommuting. The handbook includes information on how to implement a telecommuting program, sample telecommuting policy, agreement, telecommuter's agreement, and telecommuter and supervisor surveys.

To Order: Contact AT&T at (800) 344-3133

The Telecommuting Zone

by Arizona Department of Administration

This training package includes a video (28 minutes) and a "Facilitator's Guide." The video is intended to be interactive for in-class discussion and workbook exercises. It is divided into 10 modules. Each module deals with a separate issue such as telecommutable and non-telecommutable tasks, organizing the home workspace, and communicating with co-workers.

To Order: Contact John Corbett, Telework Programs Administrator (602) 542-3637, FAX (602) 542-3636

Price: \$41.

Periodicals

Telecommuting Review

by Gil Gordon Associates

Written for employers and vendors, Telecommuting Review is a monthly newsletter covering telecommuting progress since 1984. Public and private sector firms can gain ideas and solutions for beginning or expanding successful telecommuting programs.

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Price: \$177 annually

TeleTrends

TeleTrends. The quarterly journal of the Telecommuting Advisory Council. Available free to members.

To order: Contact Telecommuting Advisory Council (213) 993-6070. Price: Free for members.

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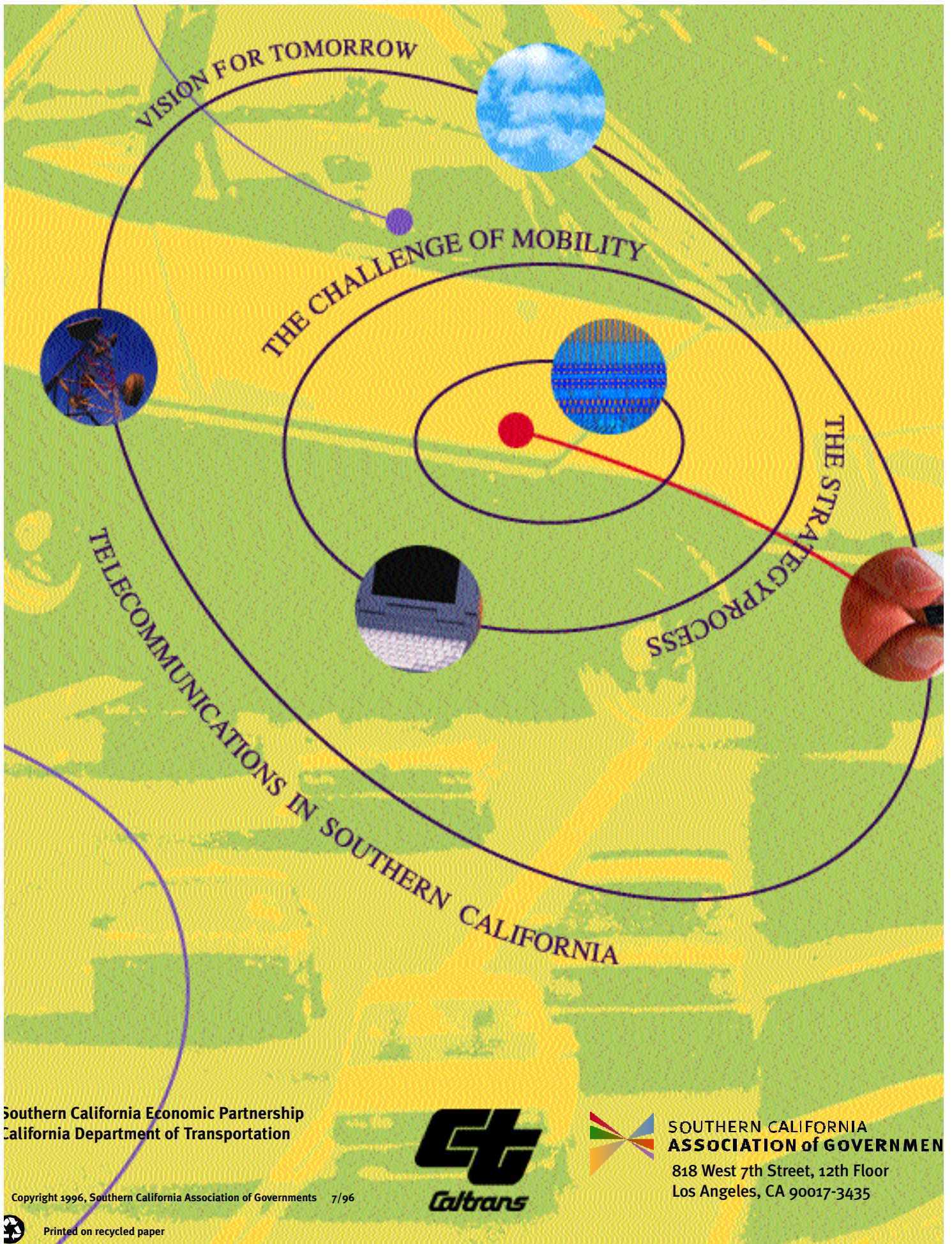
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Southern California Economic Partnership
California Department of Transportation



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